

## Socializing

Loss of autonomy is a demoralizing and destructive aspect of slavery. In a world where freedom of movement, action, and speech is extremely limited, every opportunity to exercise some initiative for oneself or one's family is important. It appears that the Oakland Prudhommes were fairly lenient in this regard, allowing slaves to visit friends and relatives along Cane River, providing or allowing dances, marriage ceremonies, baptisms, funerals, and occasional church services. Children were not generally required to work in the fields. Workers were allowed to have their own gardens, generally working for themselves on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, raising sweet potatoes, watermelons, turnips, and other vegetables. They were allowed to earn money cutting wood, and to own their own livestock. Some workers were trusted to go long distances on assignments. For example, Prudhomme's men Azeanor and Favron were sent in 1860 to Texas to bring back horses and mules for Oakland. Workers were allowed to travel to other plantations for their own purposes on days off. (May 25, a Sunday, in 1862, "Newell went to Mr. Georges to get a hog from his father Jean Louis.")

Considerable is known about the degree of socializing allowed Bermuda/Oakland slaves. Surviving records from Oakland Plantation suggests that area slaves were given considerable opportunities to socialize with slaves from other plantations. Large owners would take turns sponsoring Christmas and New Year's balls and summer barbecues.<sup>1</sup>

1. Oakland Plantation, Its People Testimony by Anne Malone

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